

## Message Text

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14

ACTION EA-14

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0921  
INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE CANBERRA 2682

E. O. 11652: N/ A

TAGS: PINT, PINS, PFOR, YO, AS

SUBJ: YUGOSLAV EXECUTIONS OF AUSTRALIAN NATIONALS

REF: CANBERRA 2462

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: POLITICKING IN AUSTRALIAN SENATE CONTINUES ON PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH SENATE COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE INTO WHETHER THERE HAVE BEEN VIOLATIONS OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS OF AUSTRALIANS OF CROAT ANCESTRY. DEBATES IN SENATE HAVE BECOME INCREASINGLY BITTER, AND RESULTING ATMOSPHERE IS SETTING STAGE FOR DOUBLE DIS-SOLUTION AND EARLY PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. CONTRARY TO PREDICTION IN REFTTEL, SUBJECT OF YUGO-SLAV EXECUTIONS OF AUSTRALIAN NATIONALS AND, MORE BROADLY, LABOR GOVERNMENT POLICY TOWARDS AUSTRALIAN CITIZENS AND RESIDENTS OF BROAT ANCESTRY, HAS HAD NEW LEASE ON LIFE AND IS SIGNIFICANT ISSUE BEFORE PARLIAMENT.

3. SCENE OF ACTION HAS SHIFTED FROM HOUSE OF REPRESENTA-TIVES TO SENATE, WHERE DLP LEADER SENATOR GAIR HAS SOUGHT TO INTRODUCE MOTION TO ESTABLISH A SENATE SELECT COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE INTO WHETHER CIVIL RIGHTS OF  
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AUSTRALIAN CROATS HAVE BEEN VIOLATED, EITHER BY OPERATIONS OF THE AUSTRALIAN POLICE OR BY AGENTS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF YUGOSLAVIA. COMMITTEE IS TO HAVE SEVEN MEMBERS, THREE OF WHOM TO BE NOMINATED BY GOVERNMENT LEADER IN SENATE (I. E., SENATOR MURPHY); ONE EACH BY LIBERAL, COUNTRY PARTY, AND DLP LEADERS; AND ONE INDEPENDENT SENATOR TO BE CHOSEN BY THREE INDEPENDENT SENATORS. GAIR'S MOTION IS LONG, DETAILED, AND CLEARLY POINTED AT CONDUCT OF SENATOR MURPHY IN HIS ATTACKS ON ALLEGED CROAT TERRORISM AND ON ALLEGED ACTIVITY BY YUGOSLAV GOVERNMENT IN AUSTRALIA.

4. ISSUE CAME TO VOTE MAY 10, AND MOTION WAS DEFEATED 28 TO 27 WHEN THREE ALP SENATORS, WHO WERE " PAIRED" WITH THREE LIBERAL SENATORS WHO WERE ABSENT, BROKE THE " PAIRS" AND VOTED AGAINST MOTION. IF " PAIRS" HAD BEEN RESPECTED, MOTION WOULD HAVE PASSED BY VOTE OF 27 TO 25. LIBERAL, COUNTRY PARTY, AND DLP LEADERS IN SENATE HAVE DENOUNCED ALP TACTICS AS VIOLATION OF GENTLEMEN'S AGREEMENT, AND SENATOR WITHERS, LIBERAL LEADER IN SENATE, HAS ANNOUNCED THERE WILL BE NO FURTHER " PAIRS" UNTIL SENATOR MURPHY, WHO CLEARLY ARRANGED BREAKING OF " PAIRS", APOLOGIZES. MURPHY HAS MADE CLEAR THAT HE CONSIDERS OPPOSITION PARTIES SHOULD APOLOGIZE FOR DISGUISED ATTACKS ON HIM.

5. SENATOR GAIR HAS STATED HE WILL RE- INTRODUCE MEASURE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, " PAIRS" WILL BE OFF, AND SENATOR MURPHY LEFT AUSTRALIA MAY 13 TO PRESENT THE AUSTRALIAN CASE AGAINST FRENCH NUCLEAR TESTS AT THE INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE. HE WILL NOT RETURN, ACCORDING TO PRESENT PLANS, UNTIL MAY 26. MOST OBSERVERS BELIEVE GAIR'S MOTION WILL BE RE- INTRODUCED AND PASSED, EITHER THIS WEEK OR NEXT WEEK, AT LATEST.

6. COMMENT: EPISODE IS SYMPTOM OF STEADILY WORSENING RELATIONS BETWEEN LABOR AND OPPOSITION PARTIES IN SENATE. DEBATE IN HOUSE ON VARIETY OF ISSUES HAS BEEN COMPARATIVELY RESTRAINED, BUT DEBATES IN SENATE HAVE BEEN INCREASINGLY FOCUSED ON CONFLICTS OF PERSONALITIES. POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DEVELOPMENTS, BOTH ON STATUS OF CROAT COMMUNITY AS WELL AS OTHER MATTERS, IS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THE SOLIDIFYING OF THE LINE BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION PARTIES IN THE SENATE. THE DIVISION SEEMS ALMOST CERTAIN TO PRODUCE DEFEAT OF MAJOR GOVERNMENT LEGISLATION IN NEXT FEW WEEKS WHICH WILL LEAD TO DOUBLE DISSOLUTION AND EARLY ELECTIONS, PROBABLY AROUND THE END OF 1973.

RICE

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\*\*\* Current Handling Restrictions \*\*\* n/a

\*\*\* Current Classification \*\*\* LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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